



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH MEXICO DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JAMES K. POLK<sup>1</sup>

By Robert S. Hicks

The real issue involved in the election of 1844 was that of the annexation of Texas. To be sure, there were many other very grave problems to be solved by the next administration, but the entire country was so excited and so absorbed in the annexation issue, that, during the campaign at least, they were little considered and of minor importance.

Before the annexation question had made its appearance, it was generally conceded by the leaders of both parties, the Whigs and the Democrats, that Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren would represent them, respectively. However, as the election approached, both Clay and Van Buren saw that the annexation question was sure to be one of the issues. Both therefore felt that it was essential that they should give their views on the subject. As a matter of coincidence, both chose to present their views by means of private letters, and furthermore, they agreed that immediate annexation should be opposed. "As a consequence," in the words of M. M. Quaiffe, "Van Buren lost the nomination and Clay lost the election."<sup>2</sup>

Van Buren's letter gave offence to the South, and, although many of the Southern delegates had been instructed to vote for Van Buren, they disobeyed these instructions, casting their votes for the "Dark Horse," James K. Polk. The Whigs greeted their opponent with the question, "Who is Polk?" However, the Whigs to their sorrow discovered too late that Polk was a clever politician and that in the end he would make himself sufficiently known to secure the highest office that the people of the United States could give him.<sup>3</sup>

As has already been said, Polk's presidential term came at a time when many questions were demanding settlement, but since the annexation question overshadowed all other questions, it remained for Polk to define the rest of his pro-

---

1. It is my intention to continue the present paper only to the beginning of the Mexican War. The diplomatic relations at the close of the war were not important so far as Mexico was concerned. The United States made her demands and Mexico had nothing to do but sign.

2. Diary of James K. Polk, edited by M. M. Quaiffe, Vol. I, Biographical Sketch, xxvii; Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 157-158; Schouler, iv., 465, note (letters).

3. Diary of Polk, Biographical Sketch, Vol. I, xxvii; Reeves, 159.

gram. This he did very successfully. Reeves in writing on the subject of Polk's program said: "Polk came into the Presidential Chair with a well defined program. It was, in the main, not one dictated to the President by his party nor was it formulated for him by his political associates and advisers."<sup>4</sup> Polk's program is very often spoken of as a "five point" program, for there were five clearly defined issues which he desired to bring to completion. These five issues were: (a) the annexation of Texas; (b) the reduction of the protective tariff of 1842 to a tariff for revenue only; (c) the establishment of the independent treasury; (d) the settlement of the dispute with Great Britain over the Oregon boundary; and, (e) the acquisition of California.<sup>5</sup>

With the exception of the first point, this program may be considered as belonging to Polk. On this first point, the annexation of Texas, Polk was elected, and this cannot therefore be truly said to be his. Furthermore, Tyler had been desirous of carrying this point to completion during his administration, and as soon as the country registered its opinion in favor of annexation he lost no time in carrying the measure through by means of a joint resolution of both houses of Congress. This was done on March 3, 1845, just one day before Polk took his oath of office. However, it remained for Polk to carry into effect the joint resolution. Furthermore, Texas had not yet accepted the offer of the United States Congress, and it required much firmness in diplomatic dealings to complete annexation. This Polk did. He considered that since Texas had previously offered herself to the United States, and the United States had now agreed to accept the offer, the United States had therefore gone far enough not only to give her power, but also to obligate her to protect the state of Texas from foreign aggression.<sup>6</sup>

It does not seem necessary to deal with the manner in which Polk carried out his entire program. The tariff and the sub-treasury questions are not related to matters concerning our subject, the diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico. They are purely domestic questions, and their only possible relation would be political,

---

4. Reeves, 267.

5. *Ibid.*; Diary of Polk, I, Biographical Sketch, xxix; cf. notes taken from lecture of Dr. Robt. C. Cleland, Occidental College. Polk's program can also be ascertained from the Diary proper, Vol. I. He is continually restating with firmness his conviction on these points and stating that he would hold to them regardless of the consequences. Even his closest political friends were unable to swerve him from his early defined program. He was also very jealous of his cabinet members for fear they were trying to undermine his program from purely political motives.

6. Diary of Polk, I, (at time of sending Taylor to Rio Grande).

i.e., some politicians were then, as now, always ready from purely selfish political motives to hold up foreign questions which have no possible connection with domestic issues. Such men are unwilling to let pass a foreign issue until they have their own pet domestic project carried through. This was true to a certain extent with Polk's program, but Polk always considered them as separate issues and treated them as such. Throughout Polk's Diary he seems to have been unable to see the connection between the slavery issue and relations with Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

As to the Oregon question, there is a closer relation to the relations with Mexico, although Polk either ignored it or failed to see it. At about the time that Polk was desirous of getting Congress to serve notice on Great Britain that we were ready to abrogate the Oregon Treaty of 1827 affairs in Mexico also seemed nearing a crisis. Many, for the sake of getting affairs settled with Great Britain before we involved ourselves in a struggle with Mexico, tried to get Polk to offer a second proposition with Great Britain, and some even urged him to offer to arbitrate. Polk steadily refused to depart from his annual message. He stated that we had offered to compromise at 49°, that Great Britain had refused to accept our proposition, and that now Great Britain must make the first move.

Mr. Buchanan, Col. Benton, Senator Allen, and others tried to convince Polk that Great Britain was taking advantage of our situation in Mexico to get a bargain out of the Oregon settlement and that he should therefore again make the offer of 49°, which they now felt sure Great Britain would accept. This then would free our hands for a settlement with Mexico and would also keep Great Britain from interfering with Mexico recognizing the independence of Texas and also coming to terms with us in regard to the boundary.<sup>8</sup> Polk firmly refused and continued to treat each issue separately. In fact, he did not believe that Great Britain was holding aloof from a settlement of the Oregon question because of our adverse circumstances with Mexico. He continually asserted to senators as they called upon him that if they had acted firmly upon his message to the Senate the question would have been settled long ago.<sup>9</sup>

The last point of Polk's program, the acquisition of California, will be considered in the part of the paper dealing with the Slidell Mission. Perhaps in connection with Polk's

---

7. Especially Volume 1.

8. Diary of Polk, I, August 30, 1845; Reeves, Ch. X.

9. Diary of Polk, I, Jan. 4, 1846 and Oct. 21, 1845; also Oct. 25, 27, 29, 1845. cf. Richardson's Messages, IV, 381; Reeves, 258; Diary of Polk, I, Aug. 30, 1845.

program, it would be well to make the following brief remarks: Every part of Polk's program was carried to completion before the end of his term in 1849. Any one who will take the pains to review the Diary of Polk, edited by M. M. Quaiffe, will be convinced that it was Polk who was the master of the administration, and he it was who "guided the executions of his policies." While Polk was at all times ready and willing to ask and receive advice from his cabinet and close political friends, he was never willing to be swerved from the program which he wished to accomplish.

His success may also be discovered in his Diary. Polk had a talent for industry. He did not give a task for a subordinate to do which he could do himself. Often, when he gave Buchanan a message to write he would at the same time prepare the message himself and then they would compare them. Polk was not a candidate for a second term. He could therefore hold to his program without fear or favor. What he deemed best for his country that he did, even at the cost of a war and a division of his party. Some writers, (Jay, Livermore, Reeves) seem to think that Polk's desire for California was merely to bring fame to his administration. In a review of his Diary I failed to see that aspect of his policy. He desired California because he felt that it would be a great asset to the nation. If the diary reveals anything at all, it is his conscientiousness and his religious nature. Then finally, Polk was qualified in administration work. He was well qualified for leadership and insisted on being the center of the administration. His talent for industry, his singleness of purpose, and his leadership ability assisted Polk mightily in carrying to completion his "five point" program.

We are now ready to deal with the situation in Mexico. Soon after Tyler retired from office, diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico were suspended. On March 6, 1845, Almonte, the Mexican Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States made a formal protest against the joint resolution passed by the last Congress "for the annexation of Texas to the United States." Almonte then surrendered his passports to the Secretary of State, accompanying his note with some scurrilous remarks about the hospitality shown by the United States toward Mexico in the annexation of Texas. The administration tried to show him wherein the United States were within bounds of their just rights, but all to no purpose. He abruptly terminated his mission and left the country. About the same time our minister to Mexico, Wilson Shannon, was refused intercourse with the Mexican Government. Pre-

viously, under a like situation, Waddy Thompson had requested his passports, but the Mexican Government refused them to him. Shannon thought that he would try the same thing, but to his surprise he was given them, accompanied with a note fiercely denouncing the policy of the United States. Thus for the time being, all diplomatic intercourse between the two countries was suspended.<sup>10</sup>

It will probably help to make clear Polk's policy if the internal conditions of Mexico are taken into consideration. As is usually the case, there was more than one party in Mexico. The party in power was struggling with might and power to maintain the reins of government. General Herrera was the president of the Provisional Government. If he had desired to be more or less friendly toward the United States, it would have been impossible because of the other party.

When the Mexican people received the news of the annexation of Texas a tremendous commotion was produced. The existing government was denounced and war became the cry of the hour. When they learned of the favorable action of Texas in regard to annexation the commotion was greatly increased. The people were told that the United States intended to take more than merely Texas, that their aim was to absorb the whole of Mexico. Preparations for war were made on every hand. Money loans were voted by Congress, and collecting of troops and munitions begun.

However, the Herrera Government was beset with other difficulties more serious than those arising out of the annexation of Texas. Conditions in California were far from promising. Three movements had been going on in California since 1836, which by the time of Polk's administration had practically placed California out of control of the Mexican Government. (a) There had been a rapid increase in English-speaking population of California. This was a class of persons who felt themselves superior to Mexican laws, and who very naturally caused the Mexican Government much anxiety. And this class about 1844 was rapidly becoming chiefly American, an element of which was endeavoring to stir up rebellion, thinking that the Mexican Government would finally give them independence. (b) Therefore, along with the rapid change in the populis in California, came a demand for self government until finally the government in California had practically no control. (c) Previous to 1836, the Mission system had played a great part in the administering of the California government.

---

10. Reeves, 267, 268; Smith, War with Mexico, I, 87.

This system was now destroyed, and with its destruction the genuine Mexican control over California may be said to have ceased."

Although relations with California were about as bad as they could be, yet the domestic problems were far greater. Rives gives a paragraph on the situation in Mexico as regards her domestic affairs, which sums up the matter:

The government of Herrera had no following throughout the country. He was himself more or less the accident of an hour, and was quite devoid of the personal strength and qualities of leadership which had enabled Santa Anna to retain for so long a time his hold on the governing class in Mexico. Every important man in the country was almost openly plotting to obtain power, but yet there seemed to be no man with sufficient courage and prestige to establish a government. The conditions of the treasury went from bad to worse. The ordinary receipts were far from sufficient to meet the ordinary expenditures in time of peace, even though not a dollar of interest was paid on the foreign debt and the payment of the installments due by treaty to the United States had been suspended. The army had become more and more unmanageable every day, partly because the money to pay, feed, clothe, and arm it could not be had, and partly because the revolutions of the past four years, which had begun by making Santa Anna a dictator had ended by overthrowing him, *had emphasized the ability of the army to make and unmake the government of Mexico.* Both of those revolutions had been commenced by the active and ambitious Paredes, who had failed to receive any reward which he considered adequate for his desserts, and who was now constantly engaged in schemes for putting himself in Herrera's place.<sup>12</sup>

Herrera was elected President of Mexico in 1845 to fill out the term of Santa Anna. The cabinet which had been loosely held together was reconstructed. But just before this election and the reconstruction of the cabinet, Polk had sent an agent, Dr. Parrott, to make an effort to reopen diplomatic negotiations with the Mexican Government. He was the forerunner of the Slidell Mission. Parrott was supposed to be a secret agent and he was given no instructions as to how he was to proceed to open diplomatic relations.

Should you clearly ascertain that they are willing to renew our diplomatic intercourse, then, and not till then, you are at liberty to communicate to them your official character and to state that the United States will send a minister to Mexico as soon as they receive authentic information that he will be kindly received.<sup>13</sup>

Now just what was the intention of Polk in sending Parrott to Mexico to prepare the way for diplomatic re-

11. Bancroft, Cal., IV, 458-91.

12. Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, II, 53-54. (Italics mine.)

13. Buchanan to Parrott, March 28, 1845, Moore, *Buchanan's Works*, Vol. VI; Reeves, 269.

lations? In other words, why the Slidell Mission? It was simply a part of his plan for the acquisition of California. Polk had two plans to secure California. The plan most desired was to be carried out by Slidell, the purchase of California. If this plan failed then he meant to assist California to throw off the Mexican yoke.<sup>14</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to treat of this second plan, but it is well to carry in mind that Polk had his second plan in view at all times. The proof that this plan was in existence is to be found in the instructions of Larkin and Stockton, the secret mission of Gillespie, and the exploits of Fremont.<sup>15</sup>

That Polk intended to take California is made known by a letter of General Fremont in which he said: "Mr. Bancroft had sent Mr. Gillespie to give me warning of the new state of affairs and the designs of the President. . . . Through him I now became acquainted with the actual state of affairs and the purpose of the Government. The information through Gillespie had absolved me from my duty as an explorer and I was left to my duty as an officer of the American army with the further authoritative knowledge that the *Government intended to take California*. . . . It has been made known to me now on authority of the Secretary of Navy that *to obtain possession of California was the chief object of the President*."<sup>16</sup>

Some of the reasons why our government desired to restore diplomatic intercourse with Mexico are mentioned by Smith: (a) political and commercial; (b) to collect the unpaid installments of our awards; (c) to prosecute our claims; (d) to guard our citizens there; (e) to adjust the Texan trouble; (f) to head off any designs of foreign countries to set up a monarchy in Mexico; (g) Polk felt that Great Britain had an eye upon California and that by having a minister in Mexico we could forestall her moves in California.<sup>17</sup>

However, the chief object of the Slidell Mission was stated by Polk himself in his Diary concerning a cabinet meeting held September 16, 1845. In this meeting dispatches were read from Dr. Parrott, the latest dispatch being dated August 29, 1845. His opinion which was also

14. Reeves, 280-281.

15. Buchanan to Larkin, October 17, 1845, in Buchanan's Works, VI, First Phase of the Conquest of California, I, Jones, in Papers of the Cal. His. Soc., 61-94.

16. Papers Cal. Hist. Soc. First Phase of the Cal. Conquest, I, 61-94. (Italics mine.)

17. Smith, War with Mexico, I, 89-90.



confirmed by Mr. Black and Mr. Dimond, consuls in Mexico at the time, was that there would be no declaration of war against the United States nor no invasion of Texas because the government was busy in keeping down a revolution. It was his further belief that the Mexican Government was desirous of establishing diplomatic relations with the United States. The cabinet agreed that diplomatic relations should be reopened but that this should be kept a secret. John Slidell, member of Congress from Louisiana, 1843-1845, was agreed upon as the proper man for the mission. "One of the greatest objects of the mission," as stated by the President, "would be to adjust a permanent boundary between Mexico and the United States, and that in doing this the Minister would be instructed, for a pecuniary consideration, to secure Upper California and New Mexico." The boundary as suggested by Polk was as follows: Beginning at the mouth of the Del Norte, up this river to El Paso (31° 45' West) to the Pacific. Mexico to cede all north and east of that line to the United States. "The President said that for such a boundary the amount of pecuniary consideration to be paid would be of small importance." If it could not be had for less, "he was ready to pay forty millions for it." The cabinet concurred.<sup>18</sup>

By the next day however, Polk had got into possession of some New Orleans papers dated August 21, which stated that the war spirit in Mexico was considerably increased, and that General Bustamante had been appointed commander-in-chief of the army. He therefore felt that the news from the consuls in Mexico might be erroneous, so he felt that further news should be received from Mexico before sending Slidell. Another cabinet meeting was held and it was decided that a letter should be sent Mr. Black "authorizing him to ascertain officially from the Mexican Government whether a minister would be received" or not.<sup>19</sup>

On November 6, dispatches were received from Mexico to the effect that Mexico was willing to receive a minister from the United States to renew diplomatic relations.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Buchanan agreed with Polk that a minister should be appointed and that his appointment should be kept a secret. The President ordered Buchanan to draw up the instructions which were read the next day before the cabinet. The Cabinet unanimously agreed to the instructions.<sup>21</sup>

---

18. Diary of Polk, I, 33-35.

19. *Ibid.*, 35, 36.

20. *Ibid.*, 91.

21. *Ibid.*, 92.

In his instructions, Slidell was told to present himself to the Mexican Government as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. Here is where trouble began. The Mexican Secretary made an indirect reply when it was asked whether Mexico "would receive an Envoy from the United States." His reply was that his government was disposed to receive a "*comissioner*" of the United States, and also stated that the question to be settled was the Texan question.<sup>22</sup> However, notwithstanding this diplomatic language, Slidell was hurried to the Mexican border without waiting for confirmation from the Senate.

Slidell was also to counteract the influence of foreign powers exerted there against the United States and to restore the peace and good will which formerly existed. He was to reject any proposition of mediation by a foreign power. The first subject which he was to take up was the claims of our citizens against Mexico. It was very natural that he should be instructed to deal with these claims first. It was well recognized by the Administration that the Mexican Government was not in a condition to make payment on these claims.

It would therefore be easy to suggest the payment of land to the United States and the settlement of boundaries in dispute. If Mexico would only agree to the boundary as defined by the Act of Congress of Texas, approved December 19, 1836, (i.e., the Rio Grande from its mouth to its source), Slidell was to offer "to assume the payment of all the just claims of Citizens of the United States against Mexico." But this was to be the last offer.

The greatest stress was to be placed upon California. Slidell was informed that Great Britain and France had designs upon California. He was to endeavor to find out if Mexico intended to cede California to either of these powers, and if so, he was to "exert all his energies to prevent" such an act from being consummated. He was also informed of the importance of San Francisco Bay and harbor. If therefore he found it possible to get Mexico to cede California to the United States he was informed that "money would be no object." If he could obtain a line running due west from the southern extremity of New Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, or from any other point on its western boundary, which would embrace Monterey within our limits," he might offer to assume the claims of our citizens on Mexico and to pay twenty-five millions of dollars, or if he couldn't get as far south as Monterey, get San Fran-

---

22. Jay, Causes of the Mexican War, 111-12. (Italics mine.)

cisco and as much territory south of the Bay as possible and to pay twenty millions of dollars. Here it would seem that the slavery question was not involved in the Slidell Mission. San Francisco territory was the territory most wanted and certainly it was known that this was not adaptable to slave labor. And, finally, Slidell was cautioned "to bear and forbear much for the sake of accomplishing the great object of his mission."<sup>23</sup>

Of course the great object was not so much the securing of peace as it was the acquisition of California. Slidell landed at Vera Cruz in November and proceeded toward Mexico City at once. Herrera's government, as has already been said, was very weak and Slidell's presence was a great embarrassment. Black was told that the Mexican Government did not expect Slidell until January and that if they received him the government would be in great danger.<sup>24</sup>

Slidell was finally refused reception because the Mexican Government had only agreed to receive a commissioner. However Slidell did not feel that his rejection was permanent, but the Paredes faction used his presence as a means to overthrow the Herrera Government. The revolution gained headway and succeeded in overthrowing Herrera. Slidell still had hopes of being received by the new government. Dispatches were received from him March 28, 1846, to that effect.<sup>25</sup>

The Washington Administration knew that the greatest need of the Paredes Government to hold General Paredes in power would be money. Polk thought that if Slidell could be authorized to pay half a million or a million dollars to General Paredes, that he could be induced to make a treaty such as Slidell was instructed to make; but the chief trouble was to keep the foreign governments from finding it out in case the Congress should grant the sum. Polk took the matter up with Senators Benton, Allen and Cass. These men felt that he should first get Calhoun's consent, that such a measure would fail to pass without his support. The plan was to bring the subject up before an Executive Session and if that body should deem it wise to pass a measure authorizing a secret service fund of a million dollars, then they could pass a similar measure before the Senate without debate.<sup>26</sup> Polk did see Calhoun, but although he concurred that it was important to secure the desired boundary,

---

23. Moore, Works of Buchanan, VI, 294-307; Sen. Ex. Doc. 52, 30 Cong. I. Sess., 71; also Polk's Diary.

24. Black to Buchanan, Sen. Ex. Doc., 337, 29 Cong., I. Sess.

25. Diary of Polk, I, 305.

26. *Ibid.*, 307-13.

he stated that "with the utmost care to prevent it, the object of the appropriation would become public."<sup>27</sup>

A few days later, April 7, dispatches were received from the consul at Vera Cruz stating that Slidell would not be received. In such case, Polk stated that he would recommend that legislative measures be adopted to remedy the injuries and wrongs. On the same night dispatches were received from Slidell stating that the Mexican authorities had refused to receive him and that he had demanded his passports."<sup>28</sup>

Slidell had written to Castillo March 1, 1846, submitting the question of being received as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. Castillo replied declining to receive him on different grounds. "The display of force. . . . which the United States was making. . . . the course which the United States had steadily pursued in respect to the annexation of Texas . . . and the reasons given Slidell in December for refusing him were repeated."<sup>29</sup> There was nothing for Slidell to do but to return home. He demanded his passports, defended the course of the United States, and by May 8, 1846 was in Washington.<sup>30</sup>

After receiving the dispatches from Slidell stating that he was not received, Polk called a Cabinet meeting, April 26, to discuss our relations with Mexico. At this meeting he stated that he would urge upon Congress "a firm course towards Mexico."<sup>31</sup> On April 28, he instructed Buchanan to prepare "a succinct history" of the wrongs suffered by our Government, from the Mexican Government "as a basis of a message to Congress."<sup>32</sup>

When Slidell returned he gave it as his opinion that there was but one course to follow towards Mexico and that was "to take the redress of the wrongs and injuries which he had so long borne from Mexico into our own hands and to act with promptness and energy." Polk agreed and stated that he was going to send in a message to Congress soon.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, May 9, 1846, at a Cabinet meeting in which all members were present, it was agreed that President Polk should send a message to Congress on the next Tuesday, May 12, recommending a declaration of war against Mexico. Only Mr. Bancroft dissented, "but said that if any act of hostility should be committed by the

27. *Ibid.*, 313.

28. *Ibid.*, 319-22.

29. Rives, *The U. S. and Mex.* II, 79-80.

30. *Diary of Polk*, I, 382.

31. *Ibid.*, 354.

32. *Ibid.*, 363.

33. *Ibid.*, 382.

Mexican forces he was then in favor of immediate war." Buchanan stated that he would prefer a declaration after Mexico had committed an act of hostility, but that as matters stood, we had ample cause for war against Mexico and he gave his assent.<sup>34</sup> However, at about 6 P. M. the same day, dispatches were received from General Taylor stating "that a part of the Mexican army had crossed the Del Norte, and attacked and killed and captured two companies of dragoons of General Taylor's army, consisting of 63 officers and men."<sup>35</sup> Thus Polk had a different reason to declare war on Mexico, which he very readily made use of.

On this point hangs a pretty question. Was it the refusal of Slidell that caused the Mexican War, or was it the shedding of American blood on American soil? Polk felt that the American people would back a declaration based on the latter more strongly; therefore emphasis was laid upon the shedding of American blood. The other numerous causes were mentioned to make the case stronger. But this much is certain: war would have been declared against Mexico regardless of whether she had committed any act of open hostility. The failure of Slidell's mission was the real cause for the war. With the failure of his mission went also the failure of securing California by purchase and the settlement of the Texas boundary dispute by peaceful means. Polk was determined to have California, if not by peaceful means, then by force.

As to whether the war was a righteous war, authorities disagree and probably always will continue to disagree. Some claims against Mexico were just, but many were fictitious. Part of the Texas claims were certainly unfounded. The other claims could possibly have been settled by peaceful means had the Administration been willing to give up the idea of securing California. But Polk was determined to have California and he was willing to go the "limit" to get the coveted territory. Conquest proved to be the only means whereby we could make the acquisition "come to pass." The act of hostility of the Mexican Government was at least fortunate for the American Government, for it removed a part of the odium.

The Mexican Government was soon so broken up that she could put no more armies in the field. N. P. Trist was sent down to be in readiness for negotiating a treaty some time before the Mexican Government was defeated. The treaty

---

34. *Diary of Polk*, I, 384-85.

35. *Ibid.*, 386.

was difficult to negotiate because of the differences of opinions in Congress. Some wanted all of Mexico, some wanted only a part of Mexico including California, others wanted none of her territory.

A treaty was finally negotiated, however, which has since been known as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The United States paid to Mexico \$15,000,000 in cash. Mexico gave up her claim to Texas as far south as the Rio Grande and ceded all of New Mexico and California to the United States. The United States also agreed to settle the claims which our citizens held against Mexico. Thus the Administration of James K. Polk reached its goal, although it came at a cost of \$100,000,000 and 13,000 lives.<sup>36</sup>

---

36. A. B. Hart, *New American History*, 348.